

**Agricultural Marketing Service
Professional Skills and Tools Training Program
2006 – 2007 Program Announcement**

AMS continues its mission of providing services to a wide variety of agricultural and non-agricultural customers in modern America and the World. The Agency helps make the private sector marketing system for food and agricultural products more efficient, dependable, and fair. AMS is geographically dispersed; the vast majority of its employees apply skills at locations large and small throughout the nation.

AMS recognizes that its capacity to deliver these services is directly related to the professionalism and excellence of its employees. For this reason it is announcing the opening of a fifth class of the **Professional Skills and Tools (PST)** training program. The program features seven, week-long training sessions beginning in October 2006 and extending through 2007.

I. Eligibility

Applicants must currently occupy a full time, permanent position at grade levels GS 11, 12, or 13, in order to qualify for selection. Graduates of the Middle Management Training and Development and PST programs are ineligible.

AMS is an equal opportunity employer; applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.

II. Program Summary

PST strengthens effectiveness in three separate but related performance dimensions: personal, interpersonal, and organizational. The challenging curriculum is structured to develop leadership skills around these dimensions so that each session builds upon the learning of previous sessions.

The program is designed to develop effective leaders through a series of learning experiences, and to instill the principle that the development of leaders is an ongoing process. The curriculum has been updated to include the latest developments and findings in a rapidly changing world and reflects competencies identified by Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and AMS as critical to Agency success. It will also be adjusted during the program to meet emerging participant learning needs.

To keep the learning process alive during the intervals between the seven, week-long, formal sessions, participants engage in individual development activities.

Developmental Assessment Activities: During the first session participants engage in assessment simulations that yield professionally based feedback on individual strengths and areas requiring improvement. This feedback is for developmental purposes only, and can be used by the participant during the remainder of the program, and perhaps throughout his/her career.

Deputy Administrator's Forum: Week-long sessions feature presentations by AMS executive level managers who share personal insights on success strategies, organizational culture, and other points of interest.

Developmental Project: Each participant will identify an issue of importance to the Agency and will engage in activities throughout the program to address the issue. The goal of the project is to give participants the opportunity to develop competencies, become more self-directed, action-oriented and visionary. The project provides the participant the opportunity to strengthen and demonstrate leadership and interpersonal competencies; stimulate commitment to personal development; and, explore issues facing AMS and the Federal Government. The project is deliberately under-structured to provide maximum flexibility.

Optional Mentor Assignment: Mentors are a rich source of learning. Based on feedback from former participants and AMS senior management, an optional mentoring aspect will be included in the 2006-2007 PST Program. If desired, participants will be paired with a mentor, and will also learn the tools of becoming mentors.

Individual Learning Contract: Each participant will develop an Individual Learning Contract that will carry them through the PST Program and will address individual goals.

III. Requirements

Participants are expected to attend all seven, week-long, formal training sessions, which include evening activity. In addition, participants are asked to contribute a moderate amount of personal time to learning activities, including the formulation and presentation of their developmental project.

IV. Schedule

Program Announcement	July 5, 2006
Application Deadline	August 25, 2006
Selection Announcement*	September 15, 2006
Assessment Activities	October 23 – 27, 2006
Formal Session #2	To be determined
Formal Session #3	To be determined
Formal Session #4	To be determined
Formal Session #5	To be determined
Formal Session #6	To be determined
Formal Session #7/Graduation	To be determined

* Note: This is a target date. Contact AMSTI if you have not heard by this date for an update on the announcement schedule.

V. Program Application

Supervisory Assessment: The applicant's immediate and second-level supervisors provide a numerical rating on the established dimensions of performance. These dimensions were identified by USDA, OPM, and AMS Senior Management as components of good performance.

Deputy Administrator's Review: The applicant's Deputy Administrator reviews supervisory assessments.

Background: The applicant submits a personal history that includes accomplishments, education, experience, awards and recognition and a current performance appraisal.

Reason for Applying: The applicant submits a written statement describing their reasons for applying to PST, and how they expect to put the knowledge to use.

VI. Application Procedures

The applicant separates the application into two parts. He/She completes the first page and sends Part I to his/her supervisor. The applicant completes Part II, attaches his/her current performance appraisal, and forwards Part II directly to the Training Institute.

The immediate supervisor completes his/her portion of the Numerical Scale, adds comments, and forwards the application to the second-line supervisor.

The second-line supervisor reviews the application, completes his/her portion of the Numerical Scale, adds comments, and forwards the application to the Deputy Administrator.

The Deputy Administrator reviews the application and adds comments. The office of the Deputy Administrator forwards the application (Part I) directly the Training Institute.

Notification of Results: Applications will be reviewed by the PST Selection Committee according to established criteria that are consistent with Agency objectives. The Training Institute will notify all applicants of selection results through official channels.

VII. Administration

The AMS Training Institute administers and coordinates PST under the general direction and guidance of the AMSTI Steering Committee. Costs of the program, excluding participant salaries, travel and per diem will be paid by the Training Institute. Salary, travel and per diem will be paid for by the participant's program area. Distribution of this

announcement is made to every AMS GS 11, 12, and 13 employee through official program area channels.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE TRAINING INSTITUTE

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND TOOLS (PST)

APPLICATION FORM

Eligibility: The purpose of this form is to provide AMS GS 11, 12, and 13 employees with the opportunity to apply for the Professional Skills and Tools (PST) training program. Employees at these grade levels and currently in full time, permanent positions, are eligible to apply. Selections will be made on a competitive basis.

The Agricultural Marketing Service is an **Equal Opportunity Employer**. Applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.

Application: This Application has two parts. These are:

- Part I A: Applicant General Information
- Part I B: Immediate Supervisor; Numerical Scale
- Part I C: Second Level Supervisor; Numerical Scale
- Part I D: Deputy Administrator; Review

- Part II A: Applicant Background Statement
- Part II B: Applicant Reasons for Applying
- Applicant adds his/her current AD-435, Performance Appraisal

Instructions:

Separate the application into Part I and Part II.

Complete the general information page and send Part I (A, B, C, D) to your immediate supervisor. The Part I application will be forwarded directly from the immediate supervisor to the second-line supervisor and directly from the second-line supervisor to the Deputy Administrator. The office of the Deputy Administrator will forward Part I directly to the Training Institute.

Complete Part II (A, B) and attach your current performance appraisal. Forward Part II directly to:

USDA – AMS Training Institute
Room 504 Cotton Annex
300 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0203

Official mail may be used.

The application must be received at the Training Institute by August 25, 2006.

PST Application

2006-2007

Part I A: Applicant General Information

Name: _____

Position Title and Series: _____

Grade Level: _____ Program: _____

Duty Station: _____

Work Address:

Work Phone: _____

Home Address:

Home Phone: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please forward the Part I packet directly to the immediate supervisor.

For questions please contact the AMS Training Institute at (202) 690-3018 or AMSTI@USDA.GOV.

Application must be received at the AMS Training Institute by August 25, 2006.

PST Application
2006 – 2007

Part I B: Immediate Supervisor; Numerical Scale

Please indicate your assessment of the subordinate's demonstrated level of skills in each of the dimensions below. Use the numerical scale that is provided. Note that these dimensions were developed by AMS and USDA as generic elements of managerial capability in USDA.

You may consult with former supervisors if you like. Please keep in mind that this is not an official performance appraisal and will not be used as such.

Rating Scale:

LOW _____ AVERAGE _____ HIGH
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Dimension	Immediate Supervisor	Second-Line Supervisor
1. Written Communication		
2. Oral Communication		
3. Leadership & Motivation		
4. Organizing/Planning		
5. Self Direction		
6. Problem Solving		
7. Innovation/Creativity		
8. Interpersonal Skills		
9. Customer Orientation		
10. Conflict Management		

Written Comments:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please forward this application packet directly to the second-level supervisor.

For questions please contact the AMS Training Institute at (202) 690-3018 or AMSTI@USDA.GOV.

Application must be received at the AMS Training Institute by August 25, 2006.

PST Application
2006 – 2007

Part I C: Second Level Supervisor

Please complete the second portion of the Numerical Scale found on the “Immediate Supervisor” page. To the extent possible these ratings should reflect your personal experience with him/her and not that of the immediate supervisor.

Please keep in mind that this is not an official performance appraisal and will not be used as such.

Please add your written comments. Use additional space if necessary.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please forward this application packet directly to the Deputy Administrator.

For questions please contact the AMS Training Institute at (202) 690-3018 or AMSTI@USDA.GOV.

Application must be received at the AMS Training Institute by August 25, 2006.

**PST Application
2006 – 2007**

Part I D: Deputy Administrator

Please add your written comments. Use additional space if necessary.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please forward this application packet directly to:

AMS Training Institute, 300 12th Street, SW, Room 504 Stop Code 0203.

For questions please contact the AMS Training Institute at (202) 690-3018 or AMSTI@USDA.GOV.

Application must be received at the AMS Training Institute by August 25, 2006.

**PST Application
2003 – 2004**

Part II A: Applicant Background Statement

Name: _____ SSN: _____

Program: _____ Date: _____

Background Statement: In the space provided please write a short personal history, including your accomplishments, education, experience, awards and recognition.

For questions please contact the AMS Training Institute at (202) 690-3018 or AMSTI@USDA.GOV.
Application must be received at the AMS Training Institute by August 25, 2006.

**PST Application
2003 – 2004**

Part II B: Applicant Reasons for Applying

Name: _____ SSN: _____

Program: _____ Date: _____

Reason for Applying: In the space provided please write a short description of why you are applying for PST, and how AMS will benefit from your participation in the program.

Instructions: Attach a copy of your current AD-435 Performance Appraisal to the application Part II (A & B) and send directly to:

USDA – AMS Training Institute
Room 504 Cotton Annex
300 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0203

For questions please contact the AMS Training Institute at (202) 690-3018 or AMSTI@USDA.GOV.
Application must be received at the AMS Training Institute by August 25, 2006.